HISTORIA

O POZABIIANIU BAZILIANÓW

W POŁOCKIEY CERKWI

PRZEZ CARA MOSKIEWSKIEGO, etc.

W ROKU 1705[go] DNIA 30 JUNIA STAREGO

PARYŻ

W DRUKARNI I LITOGRAFII PP. RENOU et MAULDE

PRZY ULICY RIVOLI, 144

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1863

HISTORY

OF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BASILIANS

IN THE CHURCH OF POLOTSK

BY THE TSAR OF MUSCOVY, ETC.

IN THE YEAR 1705, ON THE 30TH DAY OF JUNE

A persecution never before seen or heard of since the beginning of the persecution of the Church of Christ—practiced neither by emperors, kings, and rulers serving idolatry, nor even by the worst heretics—until this year 1705, on the 30th day of June according to the old calendar; an act famous and astonishing to succeeding ages, glorious to the Church of Christ in Rus', Lithuania, and Poland, which holds sacred union with the Holy Roman Church as the universal Teacher and Mother of all the other churches throughout the whole world, including those which exist or are yet to arise among unbelieving nations; glorious to the Order of Saint Basil the Great, which adorns that Church, and shameful to the Greco-Russian schism: the notorious deed of the great ruler of Rus', Peter Alexeyevich, Tsar of Muscovy, a vile manifestation of foolish devotion and misguided zeal, solemnly carried out in the cathedral church of Saint Sophia in Polotsk in the year 1705, on the 30th of June according to the old calendar, or the 11th of July according to the new, beginning at six o'clock in the afternoon. I shall describe it for remembrance according to the information that I was able to obtain both from my own religious brethren—especially those who survived and were involved in that cruel event—and also from the Muscovite people themselves, since I was residing nearby in Vitebsk.

When the aforementioned Peter Alexeyevich, Tsar of Muscovy, on account of the holy faith and its union with the Holy Roman Church, cruelly murdered four priests, putting them to death in different ways, as will be related below, and inflicted mortal blows upon a fifth, a clerical brother, God has preserved that brother alive until this day, the 28th of May 1713, so that

knowledge of such tyrannical actions—which no one else would have been able to recount—might remain. And first:

What was the occasion of this tyranny? Its manner and time?

The manner of death of each of those slain? The disposal of their bodies?

And the concealment of that disposal? Its methods and time.

The preservation alive of certain remaining religious in that same monastery of Polotsk.

Finally, their release from bonds.

1. No person, nor even the entire Order, nor anyone among the Uniates, ever gave the least occasion for such sacrilege—not only to the Tsar, but to any Muscovite anywhere. As regards the Monastery of Saint Sophia in Polotsk, sufficient proof is this: Prince Nikita Repnin, a general, had already been stationed in Polotsk with the army for nearly half a year and often visited the monastery and Father Superior Jakub Kizikowski, conversing pleasantly with him and displaying a particular confidence, whether genuine or feigned.

Boris Petrovich Sheremetev, field marshal of the artillery, was likewise in Polotsk, and he too behaved civilly both in the monastery and in the church. In short, the continual visits of lower officers and soldiers, carried on with such familiar cordiality as to become wearisome to everyone, could give neither our Fathers nor themselves any occasion for resentment, complaint, or report to the monarch that might have stirred him to such actions.

Only the Bernardine, Franciscan, and Dominican Fathers, conjecturing about the cause, spread the report that on the Roman feast of Saints Peter and Paul, in the Franciscan church in Polotsk, the Basilian preacher Theophanes Kotbieczyński, a theologian, while preaching on the authority of Saint Peter over the Apostles and of the Bishop and Roman Patriarch over the other patriarchs, had discussed the matter, but without putting

forward anything intended to insult that nation or to cast their schism in their faces. This, then, was merely a conjecture of the Catholic Fathers.

The Muscovites afterward maliciously circulated another supposed occasion for the Tsar's decision, namely, that the Fathers who were in the church, or one of them, Father Konstanty Zajączkowski, the vicar of Polotsk, had insulted the Tsar with words. That this was plainly false will be shown below, where the beginning of the slaughter, commenced upon this same Father Konstanty, is related.

Others, however—not only our Uniates and Catholics, but also certain schismatics of Polotsk—assigned as the occasion the schismatic monks of Polotsk, especially their local hegumen and the archimandrite of Sebezh. The townsmen of Vitebsk who were then present there, both Uniates and some who favored the schism, having heard this from them, reported it to me in Vitebsk together with the account of the slaughter. These monks had bitterly complained to the Tsar not only against the Uniates in general, but also against the religious of Polotsk in particular, alleging that both the Orthodox clergy and laity suffered great persecutions and wrongs at our hands. In this way they further inflamed and incited him, although he had already long been enraged against the Uniates, as will be stated below.

For this reason the archimandrite himself, perhaps constrained and terrified both by conscience and still more by political fear, fell into such apprehension that on the following day, while celebrating the Liturgy at the altar in the Tsar's presence, he became so gravely ill that he was unable either to consume the Holy Gifts or to complete the service. He was divested of his vestments and carried away, and died on the third or fourth day.

The Tsar himself increased his fear when, approaching him as he was preparing for the Liturgy and performing the Proskomedia, he asked him in these exact words: "Batiushka, did I do well in ordering those Uniate priests to be shown out?" To this he

hesitated for a long time and scarcely gave some indifferent reply.

The true and not merely conjectured occasion of such tyrannical acts was therefore, for the Tsar, solely the holy faith and union with the Roman Church. This will be plainly demonstrated below by the documents that follow.

The first document. In the year 1704, after the Tsar of Muscovy had taken Rugodiv, that is, Narva, a Swedish fortress—with Lord Hrehory Ogiński, Starost of Samogitia and Field Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, being present, having sought aid from the Muscovite after the defeat at Kryczbork—and after the Tsar's triumphant return to Moscow, that is, the capital, following the embassy sent by His Majesty King Augustus and the Commonwealth through His Lordship Ludwik Pociej, at that time Chamberlain of Brest, and finally following the request of His Lordship Ogiński that His Tsarist Majesty move his army, then stationed near Rugodiv, into Lithuania, the Tsar convened a general council in the capital.

Having assembled all the secular ministers of war and state, as well as the chief ecclesiastics—all the metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, archimandrites, and other notable persons—he submitted the following proposition: whether he ought to lead his army into Poland, and first into Lithuania, and there establish the seat of war against his Swedish antagonist, or not.

After various opinions had been given by those consulting in different ways and formulating principles according to their respective reasons, when it came to the judgment of the ecclesiastics, they all not only advised him to resolve upon this course, but also exhorted the Tsar, saying:

"Tsar, God is giving you the opportunity and the means to acquire merit and render service to the Orthodox Church. This may be done in the following manner: when you establish the seat of war there in Lithuania and Poland, you will very easily eradicate the Uniates, who cause discord between you and the

Poles and the other Christian states. For some will voluntarily return to Orthodoxy—those whom the Uniates now compel and from whom they seize churches and brotherhoods, etc. Others will be forced to do so, because they will fear your power, O Tsar.

"Finally, when you render service to the Poles by defeating the Swede who oppresses them, they too will fear your power, and thus you will obtain from them not only the confirmation of the Hadiach agreements, etc., but so many bishoprics now held by the Uniates will be restored to our faith.

"Indeed, the Poles themselves, and especially the King, will abandon the Uniates as they did before, and you will do whatever seems fitting to you. Therefore, O Tsar, great sovereign, only maintain this intention and zeal for Orthodoxy, that you may eradicate the Uniates, and God will grant you victory over your enemies, glorify you among the nations, and oblige the Poles to friendship with you," etc., etc.

Having thus received such a resolution from the clergy, he determined upon it and, having received their blessing for this war in Poland, ordered instructions to be issued directing certain regiments toward Lithuania.

All this was related in the final days of January 1705 by a certain lieutenant coming from Moscow, who was leading selected men to reinforce the regiments. He was secretly a Uniate, for among us in Vitebsk he secretly received the sacraments of confession and Communion. He was a native of Volhynia. His name has escaped my memory through the carelessness of my vicar in Vitebsk, who did not write it down immediately. The lieutenant had related this to him in my superior's cell during my absence from Vitebsk, having deliberately requested a private audience. The same lieutenant also added: "Your Reverences certainly know that difficult times are coming upon you, so be cautious," etc.

The second document. Well before this, in the month of December, Lord Boris Petrovich Sheremetev, field marshal, openly spoke in Nevel to the nobles of Vitebsk who had come to greet him, namely Lords Konstanty and Mikołaj Żaba, the cupbearer and the cavalry

captain. With them were Lord Bazyli Szyszka, the son-in-law of Lord Mikołaj; Lord Słoński, the son-in-law of Lord Konstanty; Lord Święcicki, the leaseholder of Nevel; and many others who were present.

During a conversation on various matters, Sheremetev asked Lord Konstanty Żaba, the cavalry captain, how old he was and whether he had a wife or children. When Żaba said, among other things, that he had a daughter who was a Basilian nun in Minsk, Sheremetev immediately condemned this, saying: “What concern is that of yours? You are a Catholic, yet you have given your Catholic daughter to those dogs,” etc.

Lord Żaba replied that among us there was union, since the faith was one, and that a maiden ought not to be prevented from entering the religious order which she wished to enter. Sheremetev then added: “No, sir. Those dogs must be cut down root and branch.”

His Lordship Mikołaj Żaba, cupbearer of Vitebsk, came to me expressly and related this with tears, drawing the conclusion as to what good might be expected from such a friend, since upon his very entrance into our borders he gave such answers, etc.

The third document. The same Boris Sheremetev, while in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vitebsk, beside which our nuns reside, asked about the foundation, its founder, etc. Having learned that they were poor and possessed a meager endowment, he said these exact words to Mother Benedykta Osipowska, the superior: “Young ladies”—and here he sighed—“you do not know what will become of you.” Finally, he added these precise words: “But you are innocent; pray to God.” Repeating this twice, he concluded: “You do not know what will become of you.”

The fourth document. Alexander Danilovich Menshikov, at that time styled merely Governor of all Muscovy, behaved in the following manner in the same year 1705. After Sheremetev had departed with the cavalry for Orsha, Menshikov was residing at Łukiszki in Vitebsk. On Easter Wednesday(?), which fell on 22 April, accompanied by six servants or dragoons, he entered the

monastery. Since neither I nor any of our religious yet knew him, he came to the superior's cell, gave the customary sign by reciting the usual prayer, and received the customary blessing, "God grant it." He yielded precedence to his clerk, or chancellor, as they already called him, Onesim Nikitovich Shchukin. I received them honorably, offered them Easter greetings, and invited them to sit.

Shchukin immediately began with a question, asking whose idol stood upon the column. It was a carved wooden statue, richly gilded, of Blessed Josaphat the Martyr, placed upon a tall masonry column erected by the late Lord Kryszpin, Voivode of Vitebsk. I answered him directly that it was not an idol, but an image of Blessed Josaphat. He then asked: "For what was your Josaphat killed?" I replied: "For the Holy Spirit and the primacy of Saint Peter." He asked: "So you are Uniates?" I answered: "That is what they call us."

From this Shchukin began a discussion concerning the primacy of Peter and of the Roman Pontiffs, while I defended the Catholic profession of faith in my replies. Meanwhile Menshikov sat in complete silence, but his fiery eyes breathed threats. The six attendants remained in the corridor, though I did not know of them. I was alone in the cell, while the Fathers, seeing what was happening and hearing our loud discussion, trembled in their own cells.

Little by little, as the discussion continued, Shchukin began to cavil at my words, and quite openly so. At length the discussion turned to a second question, concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit. At this point Alexander Danilovich, unable to restrain himself any longer, burst in violently and said: "Do you have a Gospel? Order it to be brought." I said to him: "What new thing, then, will Your Excellency prove to me from the Gospel?" At that moment he ordered the Gospel to be brought.

The sacristan was summoned and brought it. Menshikov then cited the words from the fifteenth chapter of Saint John: "Who proceeds from the Father."

Then, arguing heatedly, he went so far as to blaspheme the Son of God, saying that the Son does not possess everything that the Father possesses, and adducing the words: “My Father is greater than I.” When I replied that he did not understand what he was saying, he became enraged and said: “Do I not understand what I am saying? How dare you say that?”

I then explained that to speak in this way was to blaspheme the Son of God together with Arius, and I gave the Catholic interpretation of that passage. When he vehemently refused to assent, Shchukin suddenly intervened, saying: “Wait, the hegumen is speaking correctly according to Orthodoxy. Arius the lawless man uttered blasphemy against the Son of God and constructed his heresy upon these words.”

Menshikov became very angry with Shchukin because of this, and after reviling me he went out into the corridor. There he said, as the Fathers in their cells heard, though I did not: “What filthy dogs!” He then walked around the monastery garden.

Meanwhile Shchukin continued disputing with me. He reproached me more with political craft than he argued his case wisely, until at last he said: “Indeed, you are learned and clever men, but you only lead people astray from the path of salvation.” He added: “You Uniates are, word for word, brought up just like the Jesuits, sons of a whore, deceivers.”

(The Muscovite expression “sons of a whore” is an inadequate rendering of the customary Muscovite expression used in anger, only then did my anger—though restrained at first—flare into sharper indignation at such indiscreet abuse, and I said: “My lord, why does Your Excellency insult me? If you are disputing about the faith, faith is a holy matter, concerning which one ought to speak only in a holy manner, not with insults—especially toward one who gives Your Excellency the honor due to you and who, though able to return your insults, respects both himself and the great name of His Tsarist Majesty, whose servant you are. Moreover, how dare you revile me on account of the faith, when His Most Serene Tsarist Majesty, among the other articles issued to the army ordered into Poland,

commanded that you should reproach or insult no one on account of religion—not only us Catholics, but neither Jews nor Tatars," etc.

At this he became thoughtful and said: "Very well, forgive me, Father; I merely wished to converse."

At length Menshikov, returning from the garden, called through the door: "Enough, come along," and himself proceeded toward the gate. Shchukin, together with the two men who had sat silently listening to the discussion, rose and said again: "Forgive me, Father, if I have sinned," and began to leave. But to the one accompanying him toward the gate he said: "Father, truly you are learned men, but you lead people astray. Trouble will come upon you before long." Repeating this about three times, he departed. Seeing their displeasure, I returned.

Having entered the church vestibule, Menshikov ordered the church to be unlocked and went directly into the sanctuary, asking: "And what is that upon the altar?" A ciborium containing the Most Holy Sacrament stood there. Father Martinian Sawtycz, the sacristan, answered: "The Most Holy Sacrament." "Yes, I know, I know—the Sacrament," said Menshikov.

Then he asked about the table of oblation: "And what is this?" The sacristan answered: "The table of oblation." Menshikov replied: "Then you are heretics." But Shchukin corrected him, saying: "Wait, this is an Orthodox practice; among us too it is called the table of oblation," etc.

Menshikov again became angry with Shchukin for correcting his argument and, saying nothing further, withdrew from the sanctuary toward the icon of the Most Holy Virgin in the left-hand chapel. There he bowed his head slightly, said something, and proceeded toward the side door leading from the church into the vestibule. Before he reached the door, he turned toward me in a fit of rage—I was accompanying him in my mantle and klobuk(kukol)—and said: "Well, you dogs have shed Orthodox blood; your dog's blood will be shed."

I answered: “My lord, you speak wrongly. We offer the Blood of Christ daily.”

At this he again said: “Yes, yes, not long now—not long for you, sons of whores, dogs”(This Muscovite expression is extremely obscene).

Nevertheless, I continued accompanying him as far as the final doors leading into the churchyard. When I remained behind, one of them—a nobleman from Smolensk, as I later heard, though I did not learn his name—bowed deeply to me once and then a second time. Menshikov noticed this. Though he had already gone some distance from the church, he turned toward me and shouted angrily, menacingly wagging his finger: “Yes, yes, yes, dogs—not long now, not long for you, dogs. They will drink your blood.”

I answered: “My lord, that is in God’s hands. We shall see when the time comes.” And so they departed.

That same night, precisely at midnight, a certain house below the monastery was set on fire so that the monastery might burn. But God preserved it, for the wind turned toward the town below the hill and burned a considerable part of the town instead.

Mikhail Borisovich Sheremetev, a colonel, came running because the stores of his regiment were situated beside the burning house, and another storehouse stood on the opposite side near our hospital, within the bishop’s jurisdiction. It contained several barrels of gunpowder, grenades, prepared bombs, etc. He compelled the Muscovite soldiers to defend the area on every side. First, our hospital was pulled down, for otherwise it would certainly have caught fire and then ignited the bell tower, the church, and the monastery. Thus, apart from the terror, the monastery suffered no damage.

The fifth document. Although I attached little importance to it, Muscovite officers and common soldiers were accustomed to say everywhere: “Trouble will come upon you.” Indeed, one corporal named Vasily, who was almost a member of the household and regularly ate at the monastery table, when Father Josaphat Jahimowicz Kapusta, the preacher, refused some request of his, replied in these exact words: “Ah, Father preacher, when trouble comes upon you, I too shall join in,” etc. See the sixth document below.

From these documents, therefore, it is clearly evident:

1. That this tyrannical sacrilege was not some accidental occurrence, but was intentional, premeditated, and deliberately committed out of zeal against the Uniates.
2. That the Muscovites had received no occasion from us, but that the Tsar had long before resolved upon this and began to carry it out in season and out of season. Sufficient proof of this is that Boris Petrovich Sheremetev, the field marshal, expressly said, within the hearing of Father Spirydion Nowosielski, the resident at Kryczbork, in response to the proposals of various colonels and others who were inciting him against Father Nowosielski: “Ah, wait, leave him alone; the Sovereign began this undertaking at the wrong time,” etc.

The Tsar could regret only that his resolution had been carried out at an inopportune time, because by this act he showed the Poles his teeth against the Catholic faith, which he had carefully kept sharpened but concealed, and thereby generally alienated the hearts of all the Poles from sincere friendship with him.

The Time and Manner of This Tsarist Tyranny

On the feast of Saint Peter, the feast of his own namesake, he spent the day in his customary manner, with banquets, revelry, drinking, triumphal celebrations, and so forth. This was on a Friday. The following morning, Saturday, Father Chrysostom Frąckiewicz Radzimiński, Archimandrite of Chereya, went to the Tsar's residence to pay him a visit and, more boldly still, to invite him to his own residence—hardly a very prudent idea. When he was admitted, he bowed and greeted him. Asked who he was, he replied that he was the Archimandrite of Chereya. He was then asked whose foundation it was, and when he answered that it belonged to the Sapiehas, he immediately received this reply from the Tsar: "Since you belong to the Sapiehas, go away, or this dog of mine"—pointing to a vicious chamber mastiff—"will bite you. Go away," etc.

Meanwhile, on the previous day before Vespers, that is, on the feast of Saint Peter, Father Superior Jakub Kizikowski, having himself been appointed to Vilnius, handed over the superiorship to Father Laurenty Kaparski. The new preacher, Father Klemens Pozniatowski, arrived to replace Father Theofan Kołbieczyński, the preacher of Polotsk, who had been appointed to Vitebsk. Present to congratulate some upon their arrival and others upon their departure were Father Joachim Korbus, Archimandrite of Polotsk and Hlebobory, and Father Frąckiewicz, Archimandrite of Chereya.

After dinner, the archimandrites departed from Polotsk across the river for their own residences, while Father Kaparski, the newly installed superior of Polotsk, set out for the estate of Czerstwiad. They had been unable to persuade the former superior, Father Kizikowski, to accompany them under the pretext of resting along the way, and so, after accepting his excuses, they departed. They found the castle gate already closed, so that none of our people were being admitted or allowed to leave.

One of the Fathers who was known there therefore had to go to the captain commanding the guard and request permission for them to depart. The captain ordered that they be allowed through and

sent a soldier with them so that the guard at the bridge over the Dvina River would not trouble them. He said to the Fathers: “Fathers, go, for trouble will come upon you.” When they reached the bridge, however, the guard absolutely refused to let them pass, until the soldier sent from the castle went to the captain commanding the bridge. The captain, astonished, said: “Go on, Fathers, on foot.”

Soon afterward, indeed immediately, the bell was rung for Vespers, and all the Fathers went to the church and celebrated the service. When it was finished, some returned to the monastery, including both preachers. Others remained behind: Father Konstanty Zajączkowski, the vicar; Father Jakub Krzyszewicz, director of the musicians; Brother Malety Kondratowicz, a young man only recently out of the novitiate; and Brother Józef Ankudowicz, the sacristan. They were finishing the Litany of Blessed Josaphat together with the boys.

Suddenly, amid a great commotion and accompanied by a multitude of officers, Tsar Peter Alexeyevich entered, and the church became so crowded with officers that there was scarcely room. Word was sent to the monastery that His Tsarist Majesty was in the church. Both preachers, who had already left the church and were standing in the corridor, immediately ran back in their mantles to greet him.

They found His Tsarist Majesty already at the high altar, where the ciborium stood, examining the vessel in which the Ruthenian and Roman Communion hosts were kept in separate compartments. Father Theofan Kołbieczyński, the preacher, attempted to address the Tsar in greeting, but the Tsar said, “Enough, away,” and turned from him. The Father approached him from the other side and began to speak, but the Tsar again said angrily, “Enough,” and turned away.

He then walked about the church examining the icons, until he came before the altar in the chapel of Blessed Josaphat. All the Fathers followed him, except Father Jakub Krzyszewicz and Brother Józef Ankudowicz, who moved to the other side of the church with various officers and answered their questions concerning the icons.

The Tsar stood upon the step, leaning backward against the altar itself, and asked the vicar whose image it was. The priest answered: “Saint Josaphat.”

“What kind of saint was he?” he asked.

The vicar replied: “A hieromartyr.”

“Who martyred him?”

“The people of Vitebsk.”

“What sort of people?”

“Nobles and townsmen.”

“Of what faith?”

At this question the priest remained silent. Menshikov, who was standing beside the steps, said: “Tell him, of what faith?” Leaping forward angrily, he repeated the question. Only then did the vicar answer:

“Of the same faith as Your Grace.”

As soon as the Tsar struck Father Vicar in the teeth with his boot and began mangling his nose and ears, the Muscovite officers who were with him immediately began killing the priests—stabbing them with sword-points, beating them, and trampling them, each doing whatever he could whenever he came within reach. Father Jakub Knyszewicz and Brother Józef Ankudowicz were knocked to the ground by the violence of the onslaught, the brother falling first and the priest falling upon

him. As they lay there, they were beaten with feet, struck with boots, and torn by spurs. Thus far extends the account of Brother Ankudowicz. Father Rozmiatowski, who was an eyewitness at the beginning, relates somewhat more; beyond this, however, there is no account of what meanwhile became of those who had been thus slaughtered.

The Tsar, having gone out into the churchyard toward the convent of the nuns, sat down exhausted upon the ground and wiped his bloodstained hands upon the grass. He then entered the convent of the nuns. When they came fearfully and humbly to meet him, he said: “Do not be afraid; nothing will happen to you,” and there he drank beer, having ordered it to be brought to him.

Meanwhile, when Father Rozmiatowski informed the superior that Father Vicar had been bloodied and the preacher seized, Father Superior, having first made his reconciliation with Father Klemens, immediately put on his habit, that is, his mantle and klobuk, and went toward the churchyard, or church, saying: “Now my hour has come.” Father Klemens restrained him once and then a second time, urging him to remain where he was and await the will of God. Finally, when the Muscovites rang the gate bell for the third time with great violence, he took leave of his companion, who remained by the stairs near the gate, and went out through it. Immediately a great tumult and shouting arose when they seized him. From that moment none of ours could know what became of him, until Brother Ankudowicz related the conclusion, as will be given below.

Father Rozmiatowski and three of the brethren—Father Zabriolko, Brother Melet Kondratowicz, and another brother with him—went down from their cells and hid in the cellars beneath the buildings upon which the cells stood, awaiting certain death or something close to it.

Guards were then brought into the monastery and stationed everywhere, at the doors, windows, and so forth. The same was done in the convent of the nuns, with two soldiers placed at every door and two at every window. At midnight one of the brethren, Meletius Kondratowicz, was so tormented by thirst

because of the terror and fear that it seemed to him no different to remain alive in such a condition than to go forth to death. He therefore crept toward the well situated in the entrance hall before the refectory doors. As soon as he pulled the rope upon the windlass, the Muscovites rushed upon him and seized him, saying: “Do not be afraid, do not be afraid,” and then: “Where are the others?” Thus the others were discovered and came out voluntarily into the custody of the guard, remaining there until the following day. These, then, were those who remained in the monastery.

The following day they were placed under guard, each confined separately in a cell, with four soldiers assigned inside each cell, four outside each door, and four at each window. In this strict imprisonment they remained for about twelve weeks, during which one did not even see another, much less speak with him. They were not permitted to possess any papers whatsoever, nor even a Poluustav book. This was no small affliction, since they had nothing honorable with which to occupy themselves and were continually forced to listen to the soldiers mocking them with words, conversations, and indecent jokes filled with blasphemy.

The bodies of those beaten in the church were dragged to a small house belonging to the bell-ringer. After its occupants had been ordered to leave, Father Krzyszewicz and Brother Ankudowicz were dragged into the room, both of them merely gasping. Although the brother had been badly cut about the head, the wounds had not penetrated the bone mortally, and he could have risen; but, fearing that the Muscovites would finish him off, he concealed the strength that he still possessed. At ten o’clock that night Father Jakub Kizikowski, the former superior, was brought to the same place and laid in a trough like a pig, tortured and groaning heavily. He remained alive there for only about an hour and a half, groaning until he died.

There is no precise information as to where he had been brought from or how he had been tortured there, for the Muscovites said only that he had been tortured and tormented at the Tsar’s palace on the island and questioned about the relics of Blessed

Josaphat and about the church furnishings, neither of which the deceased knew anything about.

Before Father Vicar was hanged, a Muscovite priest urged him to curse the Union and accept Orthodoxy. He dismissed him with contempt, saying: “Go away, son of the devil. Today I offered sacrifice to my God and received the Body of Christ. I am ready to die, and I shall die for the unity of the holy orthodox faith,” etc. They say that he had not been hanging long when the rope broke and he fell to the ground. Having knelt, he then fell backward, with his hands folded upon his breast as though at the altar. A Jesuit who had seen this with his own eyes—a missionary traveling through Moscow to Persia—related to me in Vitebsk on the fifth day after the killing that he had seen him lying in this position beneath the gallows.

The other two, Father Krzyszewicz and Brother Ankudowicz, who were still breathing, were brought the following morning to the superior’s cell, laid there as sick men, and guarded. The priest was entirely unconscious and merely gasped. The brother concealed his remaining strength and gave no sign of it until the Tsar himself came. Lifting the sheet from Father Jakub and seeing that his face no longer bore even the likeness of a human being—for his face and head had been so mangled that, when the barber-surgeon, at the Tsar’s command, attempted to shave around the wound on his head, flesh and skin came away with the razor and the hair—the Tsar recoiled, turned away, and said: “He cannot live.”

When he came to the brother, who lay with his eyes closed as though extremely weak, he called out: “Why have you closed your eyes and do not look? You are able to look,” etc. “Give this man a physician,” he said, and departed. A Catholic barber-surgeon, Lord Kośkiewicz, who served Lord Gluzing, the army physician, took him into his care, treated him, and cured him. Once cured, he, together with the other four, was placed in separate custody.

Father Jakub Krzyszewicz died one week later, at the same hour at which he had been struck down, and his body was taken away

from the monastery. The entire monastery was guarded so carefully that nothing within it was lost. When, by order of the Tsar, the religious were released after twenty-two weeks of imprisonment, they found everything in their cells intact.

Our Fathers, however, had no information concerning the lives of those five. Believing it certain that all nine had been killed, they even wrote this to Rome. Only after several weeks did the commandant Ozierow order them to write to the estate requesting provisions for themselves, and only then did news arrive from Czerstwiad that five were alive and that only four had perished under torture.

As to how and where the bodies of those who had been killed were disposed of, different people give different accounts, perhaps speaking more from conjecture, or referring only to one of them—especially the one who had been hanged—saying that they were drowned in the Dvina. It is certain, however, that they were burned in the castle, whether all of them or only some, for the Muscovites themselves said that they had burned many bodies. Alexander Worski, the Polish, Ruthenian, and Latin interpreter at the court of Prince Nikita Repnin, was an eyewitness to the place where they had been burned. He took an incompletely burned bone and showed it to the nuns, saying: “Young ladies, here are the relics of your brothers.” Yet the sisters did not dare take even that bone, for the guard immediately rushed forward and prevented Worski from speaking with them. Fearing that the bone he had taken might be found upon him, he threw it away somewhere.

The commandant released the five survivors only after receiving the Tsar’s third decree. Having treated them, he entrusted them to Father Martynian Santycz, then vicar of Polotsk, or rather of Czerstwiad, and returned all the property from both the church and the religious’ cells on 20 August 1705.

Tsarevich Alexei Petrovich, while returning from Poland to Moscow, spent the night in Vitebsk. In the morning, at about

seven or eight o’clock, as he was passing through Vitebsk toward Smolensk, he turned aside to visit the cathedral church. People ran there, expecting the certain death of us religious, believing that the Tsarevich had come for that purpose, and a great crowd gathered. By chance, however, I, the superior, had departed shortly beforehand for the estate.

When he arrived, he dismounted and entered the church. Father Josaphat Jachimowicz Kapusta, the vicar, was informed and came to greet the Tsarevich, who was already in the sanctuary. The Tsarevich asked whether he was the superior and then how many of us religious there were. He answered: “There were five, but now there are three.”

The Tsarevich asked: “Where are the others?”

He replied: “They fled.”

The Tsarevich asked: “From what?”

He answered: “From the terror at Polotsk.”

At this the Tsarevich fell silent and smiled. He looked around the church, prayed for a while before the icon of the Most Holy Virgin in the chapel, and bowed, as did all those accompanying him.

Then, looking at the altar of Blessed Josaphat, he asked: “Whose image is that?”

Father Josaphat replied in these words: “The citizens of this city know.”

At this Naryshkin, the Tsarevich’s uncle, said to him: “Are you tongueless?”

Finally, after leaving the church through the vestibule and stepping onto the monastery porch, the Tsarevich stood there looking at the column and the statue of Blessed Josaphat. All the soldiers accompanying him asked in a crowd: “What image is that?”

The priest, standing beside the column, answered: “This image is called the image of Blessed Josaphat.”

They all cried out: “What sort of saint is he, and who made him a saint?”

The priest replied: “Christ did, and the Roman Pope proclaimed him.”

At this the Tsarevich remained silent, turned away, and proceeded through the vestibule into the churchyard. A Muscovite known to the priest, who resided in Vitebsk, gestured with his hand as though closing the priest’s mouth so that he would not say such things.

As the Tsarevich was examining the church and its surroundings from the churchyard, one of his courtiers raised a very thick whip as though to strike the priest and cursed him. The priest maintained what he had said and remained silent. The Tsarevich then returned to his horse, mounted, and departed.

This curiosity of the Tsarevich was noteworthy: upon entering the sanctuary, he immediately examined the antimension, and Father Josaphat found him replacing it upon its proper place. The Tsar had done the same thing in Polotsk, going immediately into the sanctuary to inspect the ciborium and the sacred vessel.

After mounting his horse, he departed directly along the road toward Smolensk, by Bohosłowska Street, also called Great Uzhorska Street. Many townspeople and members of the brotherhood of the cathedral church accompanied him as he left. Some of them, after hearing the Tsarevich’s other conversations with his companions, heard him say these exact words: “They must all be exterminated.”

This account was written from the most certain testimony of Father Josaphat Jachimowicz.

(signed)

Fr. Antoni ZAWADZKI, O.S.B.M., Consultor, Superior of Soroki, in his own hand.

The Tsar burned the city of Vitebsk after plundering it. On 27 September 1708, at twelve o'clock precisely at noon, several hundred Muscovite troops, composed of various peoples—Muscovites, Cossacks, Germans, and Kalmyks—who had already burned Mogilev, took up their position outside Vitebsk on the hills near Łukiszki. Several of them rode to the town hall and demanded that bread, beer, mead, spirits, and other provisions be supplied immediately from the city for their men, and that the leading townsmen present themselves at the camp. The people immediately began to fear, but they reassured them, saying: "Do not be afraid of anything; we come to you peacefully." They then departed, taking with them the mayor and the town clerk, Lord Bonicz. They detained them there until midnight and afterward released them, though they had evidently bound them by an oath of secrecy not to reveal that they intended to burn the city. I infer this from the fact that Bonicz, upon returning, raised no alarm, but merely announced that they required six hundred thalers. In reality, those six hundred thalers had been demanded in exchange for not burning the Zarzecze district of the city, where Bonicz himself lived. Since the clerk Bonicz did not reveal this to the people, he shamefully deceived them, to such an extent that this great ruin must rightly be attributed not so much to the Muscovites as to the concealment of this secret. For it is entirely certain that, had the people been warned, they would not only have prevented the burning, but would themselves have greatly frightened the Muscovites during the night.

Indeed, the common people had already begun to murmur and take counsel. When Lord Samuel Kisiel, Ensign and Deputy Voivode of Vitebsk, who was responsible for the city, was informed of this, he was reassured both by the city's innocence—for it had given no occasion whatsoever—and by the Muscovites' deceitful declaration. He therefore ordered it proclaimed throughout the city and its various jurisdictions, under penalty of death, that no disturbance was to be raised, etc. This order was obeyed. Nevertheless, those whose movable possessions God wished to preserve carried out their better belongings during the night, transported them away, or buried them in the ground. For some

well-disposed Muscovite, known to certain persons, had written to his sworn brother: “Beware; they are going to burn the city.” Knowledge of these words, however, reached only a few people.

On the morning of 28 September, as soon as the sun had risen, they moved down from the hills toward the city. They spread throughout the entire city and even crossed through Uzłorije to the other side. Some positioned themselves on the hills above the city and others outside it, having already divided among themselves the quarters in which each man was to plunder and burn.

The commandant himself, Solovov, rode to the town hall accompanied by about fifteen horsemen and ordered all the officials—the castle and municipal authorities, the clergy, the Jews, and so forth—to assemble at the town hall to hear the Sovereign’s word. Meanwhile, one Muscovite slipped away from the town hall and sent word to his kinsman Bonicz that they were going to burn the city. This news quickly spread among the people, so that the women throughout the city began to howl, weep, and lament. It was therefore no time to remain with him at the town hall, but rather to stay at home and save from the fire whatever could be saved.

After waiting for about half an hour and remaining there for nearly an hour, Bonicz finally informed him that the people were already alarmed and had guessed what they intended to do, and that the officials would no longer come. Only then did he say: “The Sovereign’s word to you is this: because you people of Vitebsk support the Swede and supply provisions to the Sovereign’s enemy, orders have been given to burn you. You have three German hours; gather your belongings.”

Immediately the city was filled with lamentation and cries, and everyone seized whatever valuables he possessed and attempted to carry them away. Not an hour and a half had passed before they began plundering throughout the whole city. First they stripped the people, even down to their linen undergarments, searching them for valuables or money, and they did this to people of every rank.

The first man they stripped, down to his undergarments and even of his footwear, was His Lordship Samuel Kisiel, Ensign and Deputy Voivode, and this in the middle of the street. They likewise stripped the nobles who were with him, including Lord Wacław Szapka, Guard of Vitebsk, and others. At the same time as they began plundering, they started setting fires from the windward side and burned the small convent of the Basilian nuns beside the Church of the Holy Spirit—not only the nuns' dwelling, but also the bakehouses and other buildings.

Each man, after plundering his assigned quarter, set it on fire. Once it had caught, they rode away and drove one another outside the city. Around the city they stripped anyone they could catch—lords, nobles, priests, women, and others.

They took the sacred vessels from the ciboria in all the Latin and Ruthenian churches and cast out the Most Holy Sacrament, except in the cathedral church, where a tin vessel had been placed beforehand on the previous day as a precaution against every eventuality, and this was burned together with the church.

Among the Jesuit Fathers, when Father Mroczkowski, the superior, had taken the ciborium and was carrying it to the sacristy, a Cossack asked a lay brother: "What is he carrying?" He answered that it was the Lord God. The Cossack bowed with his forehead to the ground, struck his breast, sighed, and said: "Father, let the dog-children, the unbaptized ones, take that; I am a Christian, and I shall take it." Taking the vessel, he opened it, poured the Most Holy Sacrament onto the corporal, placed the vessel inside his clothing, and departed.

In the church of the Dominican Fathers, a Kalmyk opened the ciborium before the eyes of the prior and cast the consecrated Hosts onto the ground as far as the middle of the choir, etc.

When the fire had already engulfed the city and everyone had been driven out, they stored away all their spoils, selected the better things, carried away whatever they could take, abandoned the rest, and themselves departed.

By nightfall the entire city, together with its monasteries, churches, and other buildings, had burned down. Nothing remained but an open field covered with ashes and strewn with charred timbers.

The cathedral church, which had been undergoing restoration for seven years immediately before the burning and whose restoration was still unfinished, was burned. The great bell, weighing 120 stone, and four smaller bells were melted into slag; three bells survived. The monastery, newly built from the foundations in 1706, was entirely buried in ashes.

During this tumult, when the city was already burning fiercely, the people killed several Cossacks and Kalmyks who were still wandering about. On one of them they found two thousand złoty in kopecks alone, which fell to the common people.